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## **I never thought he would do it: Neighbours' responses to intimate partner femicide (domicide) in Greater Athens, Greece**

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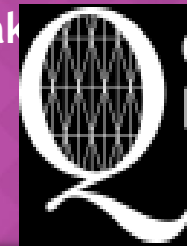
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**“I NEVER THOUGHT HE WOULD DO IT”:  
NEIGHBOURS' RESPONSES TO INTIMATE  
PARTNER FEMICIDE (DOMICIDE) IN GREATER  
ATHENS, GREECE  
.....WORK IN PROGRESS.....  
EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE  
SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Dr Maria Pentaraki**

School of Sociology,  
Social Policy & Social Work  
Queen's University Belfast

m.pentarak



Queen's University  
Belfast

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- ◉ Violence Against Women Context of Greece
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# INTRODUCTION

- ◉ Positioning my self:

- a feminist activist, professional, scholar, researcher and academic.

- ◉ Positioning the research:

- A pilot study of intimate femicides (intimate partner homicide).

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# INTRODUCTION

- ◉ Positioning intimate femicides (intimate partner homicide).
- ◉ Femicide is the extreme form of violence committed against women (WHO, 2012)
- ◉ “Femicide is usually perpetrated by men, but sometimes female family members may be involved. Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner”. (WHO, 2012:1)
- ◉ More than 1 out of 3 (35%) of all murders of women worldwide are reported to be committed by an intimate partner (Stöckl H et al) while 5% of all murders of men are committed by an intimate partner. (conservative estimations).
- ◉ “The percentage of males killed by an intimate fell from 10.4% in 1980 to 4.9% in 2008, a 53% drop. For females, the percentage killed by an intimate increased 5% across the same period □ The percentage of females killed by an intimate declined from 43% in 1980 to 38% in 1995. After 1995, that percentage gradually increased, reaching 45% in 2008” Cooper Smith (2011:18). Homicide trends in the United States, 1980-2008. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011.

# CONTEXT

- ◉ General gender equality context
  - One of formal equality and not essential equality (Pentaraki, 2013a)
  - Socio-economic context deteriorating due to neoliberal austerity policies (Pentaraki, 2013a, 2013b)

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ “Gender violence policies had never represented a major social policy priority in Greece. The issue of violence against women started to be addressed by the state in 1988, when the first state-operated counselling centre for women experiencing partner violence opened. However, the first legislative policy to address the issue of gender violence was not enacted until 2006. This is despite the fact that an active women’s movement has been campaigning in Greece since the 1970s<sup>6</sup> (Pentaraki, 2009).
- ◉ Moreover, this is in conflict with the fact that Greece had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1983, entering no reservations, and had acceded to the Convention’s Optional Protocol in January 2002<sup>7</sup>. Yet, significantly, up until 2006, there were no specific domestic violence provisions in the penal code. Domestic violence was treated as any other offence against an individual. (Pentaraki, 2013,a)”

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ In 2006, the 3500/2006 Family Violence Act (FAVA) was enacted. At the time, this legislation represented a significant advance in the realm of Greek civil law. The Act was a result of decades of feminist campaigning, coupled with the influence of Greece's Europeanisation<sup>8</sup>. Despite this, the law lacks a distinct gender component. Assessing the debate surrounding the enactment of the 3500/2006 Family Violence Act, as well as the explanatory report accompanying the law<sup>9</sup>, it becomes clear that the law was not enacted by the MPs to protect women victims of violence. The explanatory report states<sup>10</sup> in its introduction:
  - This bill was designed to protect, in addition to women, a wider circle of persons (such as children, the elderly, the needy, etc.) without interfering in the private lives of family members and prejudice morals, values and principles, as reflected in Greek society same time, however, recognised that domestic violence is not a private matter but a serious social pathology, which violates individual freedoms, particularly of women, which were hard hit by the phenomenon.
  - Pentaraki, 2013, a:4-5)



# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ This statement clearly reflects the contested conceptualisation of violence against women in Greek society: a conceptualisation that reflects the power struggles in society as expressed on the one hand by women's equality groups, and on the other by conservative opponents to women's equality groups. The protection of women is cited as an important concern, and yet this protection is undermined by stating that the provided protection will not “interfere in the private lives of family members and prejudice morals, values, and principles, as reflected in Greek society”. Whose values does the bill privilege in this statement? What kinds of choices are police officers, judges, and other professionals expected to make if they are informed by that statement and are influenced by that statement, since it leaves them room to adhere to male-dominated “morals, values, and sentiments”?
- ◉ a number of MPs' statements contained gender stereotypical comments. For example, Mr Kosmidis stated that rape within marriage is not as severe as rape outside of marriage and thus it should not merit the same sentencing
- ◉ Mr Papaligouras, the then minister of Justice stated that when the policy of penal mediation was developed, care was taken to ensure that it would be neutral and neither of the two parties would benefit.
- ◉ (Pentaraki, 2013, a:5)

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ “Additionally, the necessary provisions were not made in order to ensure that there is a coordinated response to issues of violence against women<sup>12</sup>. Despite the obvious need to provide training to professionals (Pentaraki, 2004, 2010) no consistent training has been provided to the relevant groups. Training is provided in a very fragmented way, mostly by NGOs, and it targets a small group of professionals. Protocols of cooperation have not been developed or institutionalised, meaning that what the professionals involved actually do in cases of domestic violence is generally determined by their attitudes to the specific issue before them. Regrettably, a great number of professionals, such as those in the hospital-based professions, treat domestic violence as a private matter (Pentaraki, 2010 cited in Pentaraki, 2013:6)”.

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE: SOME STATS

Extent of Violence	EU	Greece
Physical and/or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15*	22%	19%
Physical and/or sexual violence by a partner in the 12 months prior to the interview*	4%	6%
Experiencing any form of psychological violence by a partner since the age of 15*	43%	33%
Experiencing psychological abuse which involved controlling behaviour by a partner since the age of 15*	35%	24%
Experiencing psychological abuse which involved abusive behaviour by a partner since the age of 15*	32%	25%
Experiencing psychological abuse which involved blackmail with/abuse of children since the age of 15*	8%	4%

Source: FRA (2014). [FRA-European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2014\) Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report](http://fra.europa.eu/en/vaw-survey-results). Available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/vaw-survey-results>

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE: SOME STATS

Awareness/ Attitudes/Opinions	EU	Greece
Non awareness of the national-level organisations or victim support services	19%	53%
Non awareness of existence of specific legislation	?	24%
Women indicating that they know women in their circle of friends and family who have been a victim of any form of domestic violence	39%	33
Women indicating that they have recently seen or heard advertising campaigns against violence against women	50%	70%
Women agreeing that doctors should ask women with certain injuries if their injuries have been caused by violence	87%	80%
Source: FRA (2014). <u>FRA-European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014)Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report</u> . Available at <a href="http://fra.europa.eu/en/vaw-survey-results">http://fra.europa.eu/en/vaw-survey-results</a>		

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ Considering the results at EU Member State level, the experience of physical and/or sexual partner violence in the past 12 months does not show big variations between the Member States. The rates range from 6 % of women who have a current or previous partner experiencing physical and/or sexual partner (current or previous) violence in the past 12 months in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia, to some 2 % of women with a current or previous partner experiencing such violence in Estonia, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. (FRA, 2014:35)

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ On average, one in five women in the EU (19 %) is not aware of any of the national-level organisations or victim support services listed in the questionnaire, However, the majority of women Greece (53 %) have not heard of any of the institutions or services asked about in the questionnaire (FRA, 2014:162).
- ◉ At the EU Member State level, the results range from 60 % of women in Denmark and Latvia, and 53 % of women in Finland having experienced some form of psychological violence in their relationships, to one in three women in Ireland (31 %), Greece (33 %) and Spain (33 %) having experienced this. (FRA, 2014:73).
- ◉ When asked about the existence of specific legislation, 28 % of women in Estonia, Malta and Finland, and almost every fourth woman in Greece (24 %), Latvia (23 %), the United Kingdom (23 %) and Bulgaria, Spain and the Netherlands (each 22 %) indicate that they do not know if there are any specific laws or political initiatives for protecting women in cases of domestic violence in their country of residence (FRA, 2014:160).

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ Women's awareness of campaigns addressing violence against women
- ◉ On average, every second woman in the EU (50 %) has recently seen or heard a campaign. Examining the results by country (Figure 9.8), the majority of women in Spain (83 %), Malta (78 %), Portugal, France and Greece (all three 70 %) indicate that they have recently seen or heard awareness-raising campaigns (FRA, 2014:161)

# CONTEXT -VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GREECE

- ◉ An additional area of extreme concern centres on incidents of femicide. Publicly available, official statistical records do not exist, and neither has any targeted intervention been undertaken in the name of prevention. According to content analysis of Greek newspapers occasionally conducted by women's groups, one to two women are killed per month (Women's Group of Thessaloniki, 2009). Women activists have expressed concerns about the failure of the state to protect these women from being killed, noting the lack of coordinated services and strong protective enforcement mechanisms, among other things. Women activists note that even when a member of the police force is responding to the breach of a restraining order due to the absence of a coherent monitoring system, the police has no way to assess or be informed about the lethality potential in the case at hand. This, in combination with the service gaps that exist - along with the absence of a comprehensive system to protect women - can lead one to point the finger of blame directly to the State.



# PILOT RESEARCH

- Research question:
- What are the attitudes of bystanders (neighbors) to violence against women (intimate partner abuse and femicide/domicide)?
  - Are they aware of a history of violence that the victim of femicide might have faced by the murder/perpetrator?
  - Did they do anything to address it and the reasons why and why not for their actions?
  - Now that they are aware of the potential lethality of intimate partner violence what would they do if they encountered a woman being abused?

# PILOT RESEARCH

- About a third of all intimate partner violence occur in the presence of a third party compared to about two-thirds of violence between strangers or other acquaintances. (Planty, 2002)
- Previous research with bystanders has engaged mostly with giving them hypothetical scenario of domestic violence and asking them how they would react.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## ◉ Data collection method

- Qualitative structured one to one interviews, who lasted from 25 minutes to 50 minutes.

## ◉ Sample

- From a list of murdered women. The sample were the neighbors who were adjacent to the home of five femicide victims. The list of the femicide victims was gathered through a content analysis of newspapers of a women's Group of Thessaloniki and had taken place during the last year previous the interview.
- The plan was to knock at the doors of the homes that were right and left , then neighbors who were opposite of the home. The aim was to get four interviews for every femicide victim. The selection criteria were based on an assumption of neighbors who might have the best optical and acoustical access to the home of the victim. If four participants were not secured from right, and left and opposite then the interview team was approaching the nearest possible homes.

## ◉ Participants

- Initially eighteen participants (10 women- 8 men). One was excluded due to insufficient answers. 17 participants (10 women- 7 men).
- 22 people refused to talk and nine were absent from their house.
- Response rate 45% (n=18) out of 40 people that were approached.

## ◉ Time of Interviews

- The interviews were completed from 27/9/2009 to 17/10/2009 during Saturday and Sunday from 9.00 to 14.00.

# SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- The findings reveal that the research participants were aware of the context of the domestic violence in which the femicides occurred but that almost half were reluctant to intervene, citing the sanctity of people's private lives as the reason for non-intervention which raises questions about the politics of privacy. Furthermore, none of the research participants expected the victim of domestic violence to be killed by the perpetrator. Unfortunately, almost half of the participants' reluctances to intervene remained intact even after the femicide had taken place.

# KNOWLEDGE OF A HISTORY OF PREVIOUS VIOLENCE

- ◉ Everyone had knowledge of the violence and some had seen injuries in the victim.
  - Leave me alone she was telling him...I am hurting and other things...I could not understand everything she was saying . She was screaming though ...I think he hit her...too bad the woman..I could not know that she was going to die..
    - (45 years old woman immigrant, frontida ilikiomenon)
  - I remember one night at 12.30 I was just coming back from work and I heard screams, fights, fasaria. She was screaming leave me alone and he was screaming at her swearing at her. He must have hit her too.
    - (26 year old woman, dikigoros)

# KNOWLEDGE OF A HISTORY OF PREVIOUS VIOLENCE

- ◉ Only two participants indirectly blamed the woman or equalized the blame:
- ◉ She had him the jack ash (ton axreio) everyday to treat her like garbage and to abuse her
  - (30 year old woman, nosileytria).
- ◉ They were arguing for irrelevant things. With every little thing they were having a fight. For food, for one thing or another. Both of them were ready to fight (se theseis maxeis).
  - (45 years old woman, noikokira)

# KNOWLEDGE OF A HISTORY OF PREVIOUS VIOLENCE AND POSSIBILITY OF LETHALITY

- ◉ Even though everyone knew the history of the violence almost no -one except two expected the violence to escalate to murder.
- ◉ *They were screaming a lot but I never thought that something could happen to her...every couple fights.*
  - (Participant 3, 40 year old man)
- ◉ *I never thought that her life was in danger. But the last days before he killed her he was bursting into the home and were having big fights.*
  - (Participant 5, 43 year old woman)

# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- ◉ Almost half did not take any action
- ◉ Key issues raised by the participants/passive bystanders who did not intervene:
  - Normalization of violence/men are men
  - Normalization of violence/couple's violence
  - Isolated case
  - Belief in post separation safety
  - Fear not to make things worse
  - Fear for their own safety
  - Did not want to be seen as meddling In the lives of others



# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- ◉ *To tell him what? Stop arguing; or should I have gone to the woman and ask her if her husband beats her? Or should I have gone to him and ask him if he beats his wife? No these things are not possible*
  - (Participant 9, 23 year old man, fotitis)

# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- I can't get into their house. What should I have done? If he abused me? A man has not gone from the neighbourhood. How could I go and tell him don't abuse her. ...I am scared what should I do after? If he finds me outside , he will say this is my job....I had no job to intervene. They were together. What could I have said?
  - Maybe something that you heard?
- What , no what should I have said. This was not my job. ....Some men abuse but he was bad he did not love her he killed her.
  - (Participant one , 45 year old immigrant woman. This participant's attitudes were not transformed due to the knowledge of lethality)

# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- First time I heard them (fight) I got scared because we did not have things like these here but then I realized that it was a couple's quarrel...I saw that the gal was ok so then I completely relaxed
  - When you heard them again did you get upset?
- No my girls, it was a couple and all the couples fight, even I fought with my late husband ...
  - Have you ever thought to call the police?

Oh no no what are you saying my girl, and to get in trouble? They could have asked me the reason and they could have had every right to do so. What business do I have to intervene in a couple's life.....neighbours have no right to intervene in these cases.....OK a man can be a bit abusive but he overdid. He should not have done it. He will go to hell. She was a nice gal maybe she should not have disagreed with him. Continues.....

(Participant 2, a 65 year old woman)

Abuse in the couple is a private matter which is the business of no one

Gender roles/ victim


# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- ◉ (Then she proceeds to give advice to the interviewers who were young social work senior students in their early twenties). Look girls you are young you need to play it dumb to the man in order for things to work out.
  - When you say dumb what do you mean?
- ◉ Eh, the man could yell at you, could flirt with other women and even he might raise his fist a bit but the woman needs to find his buttons (to appease him) and is important not to oppose him, did you understand?
- ◉ (Participant 2, a 65 year old woman. (This participant's attitudes were not transformed due to the knowledge of lethality)
- ◉ )

Gender  
roles



# PASSIVE BYSTANDERS

- ◎ ..Everyone fights [my dear-μωρε] some more some less. I and my sweetheart (με τον καλό μου) we have engaged in Homeric fights, these things occur within couples and even more within married couples.  Abuse in the couple is a private matter
- Participant 4, 30 year woman, nosileytria (This participant's attitudes were not transformed due to the knowledge of lethality)

# ACTIVE BYSTANDERS

- ◉ Interventions ranged from indirect to direct.
- ◉ Indirect interventions included raising concern about injuries but not following it up when victims brushed off the questions, to asking the victim to knock at their door if the victim needed anything.
- ◉ Direct interventions included calling the police, passing information about support services to the victim, knocking at the door during the murder.

# HAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF FATALITY CHANGED ATTITUDES?

- ◉ Just over half (n-9) of the participants (n-17) stated that the knowledge of the potential fatality was going to activate them to do something if they were in a similar position again. The majority of them were going to call the police.
- ◉ 7 participants would not have made any intervention. The key issues reflected in their responses:
  - Normalization of violence/Men are men
  - Normalization of violence/Fights are part of a couple's life
  - Privacy of the home
  - Concern for one's self
  - Belief of ineffectiveness of police
  - It was the victim's responsibility
- ◉ 1 participant could not have done anything more than she had previously done due to a sense of futility

# HAS THE KNOWLEDGE OF FATALITY CHANGED ATTITUDES?

- ◉ I do not know my dear girls. These things happen when you least expect them and since you are not directly involved you might even get in trouble. I hope that me and my family never gets involved in a similar situation.
  - (Participant 5, 43 year old woman, kathigitria agglikon)
- ◉ If a woman is not determined [to do something about her situation] nothing else could help her. [Thus] I do not know [what I could do in a similar situation]
  - (Participant 12, 38 year old man, giatros)



# DISCUSSION

- These findings are contextualised within the body of bystanders research that highlights the implications for prevention programmes about violence against women. Within crime prevention research, a bystander is somebody who observes an act of violence or other discriminatory and/ or offensive behaviour. Furthermore, bystander research is concerned with the conditions impacting upon the likelihood that a bystander will intervene to stop a crime happening.

# DISCUSSION

- The results of this explorative research suggest that knowledge of the fatal consequences of intimate partner violence in some case might influence the likelihood of intervention in similar instances of violence against women and in some do not. It will be interesting to explore what are the contributing factors. The research suggests that those that held stereotypical beliefs of gendered behaviours within heterosexual marriages/couples, believed in the normalization of violence, those that believed the perpetrator amongst other things were the ones who did not intervene.

# ISSUES RAISED

- ◉ Knowledge of domestic violence and its lethal potentiality is not enough to encourage action by bystanders.
- ◉ General prevention campaigns to change general population attitudes /social norms
  - Men will be men
  - Violence is normal in all couples
- ◉ Specific campaigns
  - How can they induce a sense of responsibility to act?
  - How can intimate public violence becomes a public concern? Violence is still approached as a couple's matter that others should not interfere. How can we persuade people that think that intimate partner violence (IPV) is none of their business and in some cases is the victim's fault that IPV should be everyone's concern? How can the personal become political?

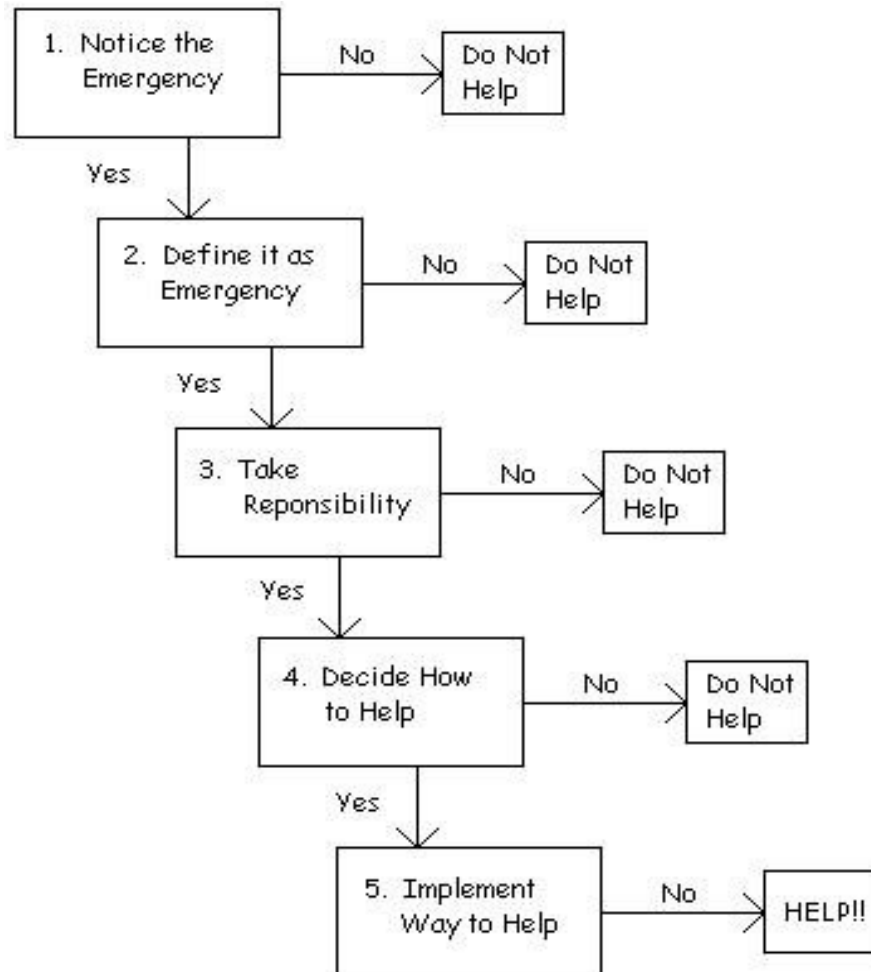
# ISSUES RAISED

- These have been issues of concern of the women's movement since its inception:
  - Trying to abolish the private/public dichotomy.
  - Trying to address IPV as a public issue.
  - Trying to mobilize a community response.

## Campaigns need to

- Challenge social norms
- Emphasize bystander responsibility by facilitating bystander capability.
- Emphasize need to intervene

# DARLEY AND LATANE BYSTANDER EFFECT (1968)



# LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

- ◉ Structured interview guide.
- ◉ Accounts constructed through memory, hindsight, selectivity, image protection (Barnes, 2013; Donovan and Hester, 2014)

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